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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER), INR (BGRAVES)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [EMIN](#) [MNUC](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: CORRUPT OFFICIAL WITH TIES TO IRAN BACK IN BUSINESS

REF: A. 08 FREETOWN 548

[1](#)B. 08 FREETOWN 561

[1](#)C. 08 FREETOWN 593

[1](#)D. FREETOWN 51

[1](#)E. FREETOWN 96

[1](#)F. STATE 22002

Classified By: Political Officer Amy LeMar for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Ambassador Umaru Wurie, ousted Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resurfaced on June 18 as the newly-appointed Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Political Affairs. Wurie's insubordination and alleged corruption (reftels A, B) led to his removal from the MFA on "indefinite leave" at the behest of the Foreign Minister. Embassy later learned from FoMin (reftel C) that Wurie has close ties with Iran, and organized a state visit for the President to Iran without notifying the FoMin or receiving approval (Note: The state visit was canceled once it was brought to the FoMin's attention. End note).

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Wurie's rise from the proverbial ashes to a position of power within the ministry responsible for mining is disturbing in light of reftel D, which provided information from a single source about Sierra Leone's uranium deposit and the possibility that Iran could attempt to negotiate an undisclosed deal to gain access to it in a largely uncontrolled area of the country. While the uranium is not currently being mined, and Ambassador delivered reftel F demarche points to FoMin with a positive response (reftel E), Wurie's new role in the Ministry could undermine efforts to prevent illegal and secret agreements jeopardizing the security of the deposit.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Comment Wurie's appointment was made by the President, along with a number of other senior-level civil servant shuffles. The President's motivation for putting Wurie in this position is unclear, as are Wurie's connections to the Minister, Alpha Kanu. It is possible that Koroma has faith that Kanu, a trusted advisor, will keep Wurie in check. Given Wurie's past experience under the FoMin, a watchful but often pre-occupied and traveling manager, he could carry out sensitive activities with high-level foreign contacts under the radar in this Ministry as well. The impact of such activities in a Ministry wholly responsible for the country's vast mineral resources, however, could be highly deleterious, if not dangerous. End Comment.

FEDZER